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THE PROBLEM OF AN EFFECTIVE MORAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS *

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO EXPERIMENTS IN FRANCE.

HARROLD JOHNSON.

IN 1882 moral and civic instruction was substituted for religious instruction in the state primary schools of France. The moral and civic teaching was supposed from the first to include the teaching of 'duties toward God,' but this rather as an excrescence and superfluity than as the soul of the teaching. The teachers, too, finding the subject difficult and delicate to handle, and not being trained to treat so subtle a question, fearing also at first to arouse ecclesiastical susceptibilities, gave the teaching of 'duties to God' a wide berth. The early manuals devoted perhaps a few paragraphs to it, but many of the later ones omit it altogether. It is true that Félix Pécaut, whom M. Compayré ranks, and rightly I think, among the great educators, strove, yet strove in vain, to supply the moral and civic instruction with a religious basis and motive, and endeavored to breathe into it his own vague yet deeply-felt theism; but he failed. His own pupils at the Higher Training College for Women of Fontenay were fired with the glow of his inspiration, but, when the Master was withdrawn, were unable to hand on the torch to others, while, in themselves, the flame often flickered and died. Pécaut had been nourished within a Huguenot stock and had had a scaffolding supplied him from which he could build. He had, however, no scaffolding to supply to others. His teaching lacked, as he himself recognized but too well, an hereditary foundation of revered memories, ideas, habits, sentiments, associations, deep-rooted in the na-

* Part of an address delivered before "The Heretics" at King's College, Cambridge, and at the Sorbonne (University of France), Paris.

tional life, without which it could not obtain a secure and permanent hold upon public education. Where may we find Pécaut's theism to-day in the primary schools of France?

In substituting a lay moral and civic instruction for the previous religious instruction in state primary schools the first and inevitable problem of the French statesman was to furnish the assurance that the teacher, in giving this instruction, would observe the strictest neutrality as regards especially the Catholic, the Protestant, and the Jewish faiths. In an early circular to the teachers, Jules Ferry makes this abundantly clear. The teacher is to emphasize the duties which *unite* men and not the dogmas which *divide* them. He is forbidden all theological and philosophical discussion in class. He is to teach only that "good and ancient morality received from our forefathers," "those elementary rules of the moral life which are not less universally accepted than those of language and arithmetic," "*la petite morale usuelle qui suffit aux petits enfants.*" He is to avoid all questions of doctrine, theory, root-principles, and foundation sanctions. He is to appeal solely to the 'moral sense,' or 'moral intuition,' of the child. As Jules Ferry conceived this appeal to the 'moral sense,' it was a peculiarly conventional and *bourgeois* one: but, as Pécaut, Buisson and others conceived it, it might have an idealism, a religiosity, and even a mysticism of its own. From the first, however, there was a struggle between the statesman and the seer, and, so far, the statesman and not the seer has triumphed.

It is curious, however, to note that when you drive God out at the door he will, somehow or other, contrive to enter in at the window. There is not wanting justification for the epithet 'godless' the Catholic hurls at the lay school, while the Protestant and the Jew, who from the first, not without qualms, have supported the lay school, are seeing more and more clearly that the strong tendency of these schools, as they exist at pres-

ent, is to cut away the very theism upon which their own faiths ultimately depend. In helping to protect the state against Catholic domination, they perceive that they have been supporting an agency which, like Catholicism itself, is directed against their very existence. The bridge that was at first reared to link the lay and the religious worlds has broken down.

Nevertheless, over and over again, a certain 'religiosity without God' persists in asserting itself. Duty is sometimes taught with real Kantian imperativeness and awe, and is felt and communicated at times in some such way as Wordsworth apprehended her as the "stern daughter of the voice of God." Teachers have been known to remark: Duty and God,—*c'est la même chose*! And in such cases it matters little perhaps whether or no the name of God sound on the lips, provided the God of Righteousness be indeed verily there.

But this introduction of a quasi-religious element is even more noteworthy in schools such as the sociological, perhaps best represented in France by M. Durkheim, which pride themselves upon their strictly scientific basis, and yet present us with a society so transfigured and idealized as a motive power for action and a goal for effort that we, too, are tempted to exclaim: Society and God,—*c'est la même chose*! "I see in divinity," says M. Durkheim, "only society transfigured and thought symbolically." Indeed this 'school' shows goodly promise, if its tendencies are promoted with a rigorous logic, to supply the world with a sociocracy in lieu of the theocracy it desires to supplant, and it is perhaps capable of exercising a no less inimical tyranny over the minds of men. For some years there was a most scrupulous regard for neutrality in the state schools. How far this was mere statesmanlike maneuvering, called forth by stress of political circumstances, or an ardent desire for justice to all sections of the nation, is a subtle question. However, after a few manuals of moral and civic instruction had been placed on the *Index* and some of them had been burned at

the stake, there was quiet in the land for a season: the Catholics still maintained their own Catholic schools, and, as regards the comparatively few Catholic children who needed to attend the state lay schools, neutrality was for some years fairly observed in them. But then ensued the separation of church and state, the expulsion of the religious orders, and again war *à outrance* between the two opposing factions which cleave the nation in twain. Following, too, upon the expulsion of the religious orders, a large number of Catholic schools have been closed, and thousands of Catholic children are now of necessity pupils in the lay schools. All the greater need you will say of the strictest neutrality! Unfortunately, however, in a state of war one is not so circumspect. Republicanism and Catholicism have been at death-grips. It has been a state necessity to make the schools serve more and more the republican ideal to which the Catholic ideal, as commonly understood, is essentially opposed. The *history* taught in the Catholic schools is said to be of a kind that turns the mind towards monarchy. The whole tendency of the teaching in these schools is said to be directed against 'la raison.' As a counterblast, the *history* in the lay school is out-and-out republican, out-and-out in the spirit of the French Revolution, out-and-out rationalistic. In a word, the Catholic school is by nature anti-republican, anti-democratic, anti-scientific. The lay school is as strongly republican, democratic, and scientific. The state school has been made a political rather than a purely educational agency, and the child has been sacrificed on the altar of political exigency. A republican state, with an enemy within its borders working incessantly for its destruction, was compelled to turn out children from its schools at the ages of eleven, twelve, and thirteen, republicans, democrats, and free-thinkers. And it did so! The problem has been regarded as a political rather than as a pedagogical one. The question as to how far this particular kind of preparation, and this particular result, are really adapted to children of tender

years is hardly raised. When, however, the first generation of voters reared in the lay schools went to the polls, the desired product was forthcoming; republicanism was assured, and the separation of church and state was at length speedily effected.

And, with a new sense of security and triumph, the victors have more and more flung neutrality to the winds. Some openly flout it. State monopoly of education is becoming a question of practical politics. School manuals are, in the eyes of the Catholics, more and more contrary to the neutrality to which the state is pledged, and the French bishops selected recently a dozen of these (chiefly *history*) books and forbade the parents of Catholic children to permit them to be instructed out of them. Bonfires are again in vogue. The Government, however, will not yield an inch. It is war to the knife and not a time for parleying.

On the other hand, there are clear indications that even the strongest partisans of the present lay education have grave doubts as to its ultimate efficacy. They would not admit this on the platform or on the floor of the Chamber—that would be to offer arms to the enemy—but the doubt is there all the same eating away like a canker at the very heart of life. And, as frequently happens, the less the faith, the greater the dogmatism, the sharper the sectarianism. So long as this temper lasts, nothing of good can be effected. But the reaction must come—is coming—and whither it may lead in France, no man knoweth.

I stated that the appeal in the moral and civic instruction was intended, at first, to be addressed solely to the moral sense, or moral intuition, of the child. It was soon, however strongly maintained that merely to 'montrer' duties was not enough: it was necessary to 'démontrer' them. The traditional religious education and the lay moral education could not, under the circumstances, but be continually challenging each other and having odious comparisons instituted between them. There were abundant

champions to justify the religious education, and champions must be no less forthcoming to justify the lay moral education. Lay moral education must be shown to have an autonomy and absolute value of its own. A mere enunciation of duties was not sufficient: a rational demonstration of them was demanded. Thus it was that a decree went forth to the teachers, in the form of an official circular, showing how a rational justification of duties may be brought, by means of the Socratic method, within reach of the intelligence of children. Kantian rationalism was now introduced to supplement and enforce the merely intuitional appeal. So far as I have been able to observe, this appeal to 'la raison' is the main appeal of lay moral education in France to-day. Observe here the difference in mentality of two peoples! The English mother says to her little son: "Be a *good* boy, Tommy!" The French mother says: "Sois sage!" or "Sois raisonnable, mon enfant!" We, in England, have confined our attention, in the main, to moral *training*, to the formation of moral habits. Moral *instruction* as such has, until recently, been regarded by us as of comparatively little account. In France, on the contrary, they have confined their attention mainly to moral *instruction*, to the enlightenment of the mind in moral matters. Moral training has had little attention paid to it. There is lopsided development in both cases. Moral training and moral instruction are both necessary and should be regarded as complementary to each other. Only pedagogical ineptitude will continue to regard them as mutually exclusive.

But neither intuitionism nor Kantian rationalism have seemed to suffice. The scientist and the sociologist are now in search of a science of ethics. The children in the schools cannot, however, wait till this new science is discovered.

Suddenly M. Léon Bourgeois saved the situation by proclaiming the doctrine of social solidarity: "We are members one of another." Each of us owes society a debt,

and it is our duty to repay it. Of course, one readily admits that this social motive can be made a deeply moving and even compelling one. With certain reservations, it is the motive mainly appealed to in Japan where it appears to have worked wonders of disinterestedness and self-sacrifice. But, unfortunately, or fortunately, it has already been riddled by French critical acumen.

No, one must frankly admit that the widely prevalent attitude of the lay mind in France to-day is one of scepticism as to the ultimately effective value of the motives for the moral life to which it appeals alternately. The appeal to intuition is an appeal to the individual at a particular time and under particular circumstances. There is nothing necessarily authoritative for all time and for all circumstances in the nature of the response to it, though we incline naturally to bow before the intuitions of the greatest seers. Kantian rationalism, too, though its challenge has a universal aspect, appeals in the main to a special and limited order of minds, especially to those with a background of Christian nurture and of liberal tendencies. And "you owe a debt to society, and, until you have paid it, it is wrong to commit suicide" has seldom, if ever, diverted the course of the knife, the rope, or the poison-bottle.

The ideal of social progress, too, is, one will admit, a powerful incentive for many; but is it calculated to inspire by itself alone the utmost disinterestedness for the commonweal? How is 'my utmost for the highest' finally secured from me? To what imperative commands do I bow in utter consecration? What finally induces me to sacrifice my more narrowly selfish interests for universal claims upon me? These are the great questions which France has only just begun to ask in connection with the lay moral and civic instruction in her schools.

The problem has perhaps nowhere been more pointedly and pregnantly stated than by M. Emile Boutroux, when he asks:

Is there for us, as conscious beings, beyond the individual life, a universal life possible and in some measure already realized? Is our reflective and distinct consciousness, according to which we are external the one to the other, an absolute reality, or a mere phenomenon beneath which lies concealed the universal interpenetration of souls in one unique principle? Have we, then, two existences, the one developed and immediately visible, *viz.*, our individual existence, the other still almost unconscious, but superior, the universal existence? What is the relationship of these two existences, the one to the other, and what method ought we to follow to bring about the full realization of the latter?

Some light has of late dawned in France, and this 'suffering servant' of the peoples, after all her heroisms, may save us yet! Bergson and Delvolvé lead the way. The former has shaken the Goddess of Reason on her throne: that was the first stroke of emancipation. The latter, in his book, "*Rationalisme et Tradition*,"¹ which appeared early in 1910, has made an invaluable contribution to our particular problem. This contribution I will here boldly outline.

M. Delvolvé, after the manner of William James in his "*Varieties of Religious Experience*," subjects the traditional Catholic education and the lay moral education in France to a penetrating psychological analysis, as a result of which he arrives at the startling conclusion that the traditional education is in accord with certain fundamental requirements of our psychic nature, whereas the lay education does not meet these essential conditions. On the other hand, however, he holds that the doctrinal basis of the traditional education does not accord with the data of modern knowledge. It follows from this that the lay moral education, in order to become effective, must incorporate in itself what is proven to be psychologically efficacious in the traditional doctrine while it nevertheless abdicates nothing of the rights of reason and of the spirit of science and of liberty.

The great question is, as I have already put it, How is utter disinterestedness secured? How is the individual

¹ "*Rationalisme et Tradition: Recherches des conditions d'efficacité d'une morale laïque*," by Jean Delvolvé. (Félix Alcan, Paris, 1910.)

finally induced, in certain eventualities, to give up even his life for the commonweal, or to sacrifice what appear to be his individual interests to universal claims upon him? How is he to be brought to say: "Not my will, but Thine be done?"

The writer considers each of the motives which the lay moral education utilizes in turn, and arrives at the conclusion that they one and all fall short of this ultimately compelling and overwhelming power. On the other hand, M. Delvolvé holds that the traditional religious education does frequently bring about an utter self-surrender by means of its doctrines of God and Christ and the immortal life, its cult and worship and sacraments. The weak spot here is that to many minds to-day, the number of which continues to be rapidly on the increase, these doctrines, at least through the forms in which the Church gives them expression, do not any longer speak with authority and command such general and unhesitating adherence as once they did, but are, on the contrary, frequently confronted by the most ruthless and destructive criticism, since they do not conform with the legitimate requirements of the intellect. In spite of this, however, for those who are still capable of accepting these doctrines they can be shown to have frequently proved effective. To what then, at bottom, do they owe their power?

The author considers what he regards as the three chief ills which "flesh is heir to"—(1) Death, (2) Strife, (3) Frailty, from which men yearn for deliverance. He holds that if these ideas become dominant, life becomes sterilized and withered; that for an effectively moral life only the opposing ideas of life, and brotherhood, and perfection, with the confidence and security attaching to them, are fitted. We have aspirations towards eternal life, towards ultimate universal brotherhood, towards perfection, and only while these aspirations are alive in us do we truly live. But if we regard death as inevitably intervening, we can no longer cherish these aspirations, since we know that, in a limited lifetime, these limitless aspirations are

incapable of fulfillment. Similarly, if we believe that one day this earth of ours is to become moon-cold and sunless, and that all human life and progress are finally and utterly to perish with it, then the real zest of social reform is blighted. The author is driven to the conviction that only the religious experience of the idea and sentiment of the divine can possibly effect the deliverance we need. Only when we feel we can merge our frail individuality in an infinite and perfect Being, only when we feel that his end is our end and that this end is ultimately certain of attainment, do confidence and security come. Then we enter, even here, into the life eternal; we are with God and no evil can happen unto us; death has lost its terrors for us who have life indeed; brotherhood is the deepest of all realities and strife but a passing phase; perfectness a surely attainable goal and frailty an incident.

The author is of opinion that what is now required is a naturalistic transposition of such religious experience as this into forms which may prove reasonably acceptable to the modern mind and in accordance with the terms of modern science. The conditions of such a transposition of religious experience appear to him to be: (1) We must replace the communication of the soul with a transcendent Being by its communication with a reality which is one with objective nature, and which is not limited to the more or less fragmentary, fixed, and deformed object perceived by the intellectual faculty. Our individual being is really one with all that is. "All knowledge is communion; all contact, penetration." We must acknowledge the homogeneity and real unity of nature with the soul that thinks it. (2) This sense of the homogeneity and unity of being involves the ultimate accord of the purpose of the conscious ego with the purpose of the universe. (3) We must have faith in the power of the Being and in the certain victory of his aspirations.

That we are one with the universe, that the purpose of the individual and the purpose of the universe are one and the same, and that the realization of this purpose

is ultimately certain,—this is a faith which would remove mountains, and it is a faith, the writer holds, the modern mind can reasonably accept, and is indeed impelled to accept, with the strongest confirmation. This confirmation is arrived at “altogether apart from the arduous ways of the metaphysician through a continuous flood of tendencies, emotions, facts, which it is the task of a psychology of action to establish.”

Of the normal tendencies and instincts of human life which would seem to make this faith inevitable of acceptance he cites, among others, the following, analyzing each in some detail where I can only in the boldest way suggest.

(1) *The vital instinct* (love of life). He notes that even the pessimist desires to live. That in adolescence there is an exuberance of life such that the youth is unable to distinguish between his individual life and the universal life which floods him. (2) *The reproductive instinct*. He notes the imperiousness of this instinct which is frequently utterly regardless of mere individual interests. (3) *The social instinct*. He notes how we tend to identify ourselves with various social groups. (4) *Infant mentality*. He notes how in the case of a child the sense of unity precedes that of separateness, how slowly a child differentiates itself from surrounding objects, and how easily it identifies itself with these. (5) *The feeling for nature*. He notes how in the contemplation of nature we are frequently impressed with the oneness of being, our union with all that is, and the universality of ends. (6) *The æsthetic sense*. He notes the identity of the artist with his creation. “The work of an artist or sculptor is neither a reproduction of an imagined objective nature, nor a phantasy of an imagined individual mind, but a new form of being, the fruit of the union of a mind with the object which it rejoins.” (7) *The scientific instinct* (curiosity). The desire to relate all things to each other, and thus to break down barriers. And so on.

By such purely natural processes, according to this

writer, we attain to the sentiment and the notion of the divine.

What has tended largely to atrophy modern thought is that we have relied too strictly and too narrowly upon the merely intellectual faculty as the sole avenue to truth, whereas we reach truth, not through this channel only, but rather as do the creator, the poet, the artist, the musician, through that deep-seated instinct, or rather that illumined insight, which is the bloom and sublimate of all our faculties effectively brought into play and duly balanced and harmonized. Science must in the future take account of facts which it refused at first to acknowledge to rank among facts at all. It must accept as fact every duly-chronicled and vouched-for fact of religious experience, as James and the later psychologists now unhesitatingly do. And in art, in poetry, in the insight of seers, in the realm of psychical research, through the deepest recesses of the subconsciousness as well as upon the broad avenues of conscious activity, must it seek those clues and indirections, those "intimations of immortality," which, more surely than ought else, lead us to the sanctuary of truth. What we touch and handle and weigh and measure and analyze in test-tubes, or compute with the finest mechanisms, are not the only facts nor the only realities. There are intangible things, not so amenable to arithmetic and calculation, which nevertheless, after all, may prove to be the deepest realities; and though, as yet, we may not be able to demonstrate them or secure for them such ready and obvious acceptance as for facts of an apparently solid order, we may nevertheless suggest connections with them which, surely followed, like the remotest thread of a spider's web, will be found to have a hold somewhere. A faith that matters will never be wholly capable of demonstration as the laboratory understands this. But the believer will nevertheless have, or should have, solid ground to stand upon, from which he will launch forth, with sure and certain hope, for the untracked spaces by means of the clues that some have left and he intuitively

divines, which, like shafts of light, shoot forth through the invisible way and bid him follow after them.

For will anything short of the infinite stir the infinite in man? Will he not ultimately have to take refuge perforce in the Source of All, and must he not feel, if the trust and peace and security (which nothing can mar) are ever to be his portion, that not only the highest interests of the nation and of humanity, but the highest interests of the universe itself (of which he is an integral part, and in which he lives and moves and has his being) call to him unresistingly for his utmost devotion? And must he not learn to cry when the fierce struggle within him goes on between the vaster and the narrower claims: "Not my will, O Universe, but thine be done!"

Ill-stated though they be, these are the questions which confront the educational world to-day. And, under our changed conditions, they have not yet been grappled with. These changed conditions are, that whereas education was originally the prerogative of the priest, it is now, in the main, that of the laity, and that the laity has never yet learned to explore deeply, and, having explored, to trust the deepest intuitions of its own soul.

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THE DOCTRINE OF REINCARNATION ETHICALLY CONSIDERED.

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IT is a somewhat saddening reflection that in spite of the presumable millions of years of human life on this planet, there is no general belief as to whence we come or whither we go, or indeed as to why there is any coming or going at all. The meaning and purpose of life are still beyond the scope of our science; they are matters of faith at best and not infrequently of despair. The pain